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# A War of Words: America's Domestic and Foreign Propaganda Efforts in World War II

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# UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

## SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

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PROJECT TITLE: A War of Words : America's Domestic and Foreign Propaganda Efforts in World War II

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

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**A War of Words:  
America's Domestic and Foreign Propaganda Efforts in World War II**

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**TITLE:**

A War of Words: America's Domestic and Foreign Propaganda Efforts in World War II

**ABSTRACT:**

Understanding that the battles of World War II were not limited to combat operations, but also included a war of words, the United States Government engaged in domestic and foreign propaganda campaigns. This essay traces the steps taken to establish these propaganda efforts during World War II through two main sources of electronic media: Hollywood and the Voice of America. This discussion also includes an examination of the relationship between propaganda and democracy.

**INTRODUCTION:**

In an effort to increase support for World War II among American soldiers and civilians, the U.S. government called upon Hollywood to use its theatrics to sell the war. The Hollywood film industry transformed the silver screen into a battlefield went to war with the production of Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* series, and "the B's," short, low budget films like *Rosie the Riveter* with war themes and heroes. The U.S. government also felt the needed to spread its ideals and war aims to foreign countries. 1939, America was the only world power without a government-sponsored international radio new service. In February 1942, John Houseman inaugurated The Voice of America to serve the need for war-torn and closed areas to hear news about America and America's war effort. VOA had many struggles both technical and in trying to find purpose and stability, especially in the post-war years. In both the domestic and foreign arenas, propagandists struggled with how a democracy can use propaganda without diminishing its ideals.

**PURPOSE STATEMENT:**

I intend to show how the electronic media was used to promote America's war aims on the home front and overseas during World War II. I have chosen the Hollywood film industry and the Voice of America to define propaganda, and to discuss why propaganda was needed, why these mediums were chosen, how effective the propaganda campaigns proved to be, and how propaganda can exist in a democracy.

## **A War of Words: America's Domestic and Foreign Propaganda Efforts in World War II**

*The principle battleground of this war is not in the South Pacific. It is not the Middle East. It is not England; or Norway, or the Russian Steppes. It is American opinion.*<sup>1</sup>

World War II is appropriately called a world war because it took place in all corners of the earth. Men fought and died on islands in the South Pacific, on the beaches of Normandy, in forests of Europe, in remote towns in the Far East, and in the deserts of Africa. War took place in the air, on the ground, on the water, and even below the water. But the battles of World War II cannot be restricted to combat; much of the battles fought during the war took place across radio airwaves and on the silver screen. These battles did not directly bring about casualties, although some messages would eventually justify the genocide of millions, but instead changed and motivated peoples' hearts and minds to believe in the importance of the war effort.

American propaganda theorist Harold Lasswell once said, "Not bombs nor bread, but words, pictures, songs, parades and many other similar devices are the typical means of making propaganda." The art of political persuasion, or what Lasswell defined as "the control of opinion by significant symbols," has existed since the beginning of time. But modern democracies and the mass media transformed it from a minor activity to an instrument of total warfare.<sup>2</sup> Understanding this inevitable "war of words," the United States Government engaged in both domestic and foreign propaganda campaigns. Despite some initial doubts, President Franklin D. Roosevelt knew that his administration not only had to bolster morale at home, but also combat foreign propaganda.<sup>3</sup>

With increases in technology and power, the electronic media was one of several mediums used to promote America's war aims. Hollywood could deliver messages to the home front via the silver screen, and to make America's voice heard throughout the rest

of the world the U.S. government inaugurated a foreign radio service called the Voice of America. Through these two vehicles, American patriotism could be both seen and heard throughout the war torn world.

### **The Domestic Propaganda Effort**

Americans needed an answer to the question of why we were fighting in a war thousands of miles away. As Oliver Cromwell declared, "Give me the man who knows that for which he fights, and loves that which he knows."<sup>4</sup> Few citizens were willing to blindly follow authority across an ocean and into battle. In 1916, 1.7 million Americans were in high school; in 1940, 7.1 million. In 1916, 400,000 attended college; in 1940, 1.4 million. Roosevelt's fireside chats assumed educated Americans who wanted explanations for citizen obligations. Acceptance of state policy, everyone seemed to agree, demanded some reason why. Not necessarily the whole truth, mind you, but at least plausible justification.<sup>5</sup>

It was important for both American troops and civilians to believe in the war effort. Six months after the United States entered World War II, the federal government launched a major propaganda program to assist in fighting the war. The dominant agency in the propaganda campaign was the Office of War Information (OWI), established by executive order in June of 1942. The purpose of the OWI was to communicate American aims in the war and to convey to domestic and foreign audiences the ideals that could bring about a peaceful and democratic post-war feeling.<sup>6</sup>

Movies provided an obvious way of informing the public about American aims in World War II. Each week, approximately eighty million Americans attended one of the sixteen thousand theatres throughout the country. Soon after the Japanese attack on

Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt called the motion picture “one of our most effective media in informing and entertaining our citizens” and said that the motion picture industry could make “a very useful contribution” to the whole war effort.<sup>7</sup> “Movies could clarify complex problems for people who were less inclined to read newspapers and other written materials, and the seductive qualities of the screen could help generate the support the nation needed.”<sup>8</sup>

Roosevelt promised to reduce government censorship and asked for the continuous release of movies that would keep the public abreast of the war. The OWI’s Bureau of Motion Pictures was given the job of “watchdog” over Hollywood film production. The OWI issued numerous guidelines to ensure conformity in the films. The motion picture industry followed the OWI’s regulations, producing films in a standard format. The results were an effective combination of information, patriotism, hero-worship, and propaganda. Other messages hammered away at similar themes. Military strength, home front sacrifices, ethnic harmony, underground resistance, individual heroism, and Allied cooperation all flickered on the screen, and attested to the total victory motif.<sup>9</sup>

The military’s domestic propaganda efforts existed on two major levels: motivating the troops to believe in the cause of war, and, as a result, perform well in battle, and secondly, educating American civilians about the aims of the war. If those on the home front believed in the war effort, they would encourage their soldiers and increase production of wartime necessities. Hollywood was able to aid in the war effort by producing motivational documentaries, like Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* series and fictional productions like the *B*’s, to entertain and persuade both soldiers and civilians to

the cause of war. One thing is for certain; “no other period in cinematic history equaled the output of propaganda films produced during the Second World War. Hollywood’s efforts contributed to the nation’s morale by capitalizing on America’s love affair with the movies.”<sup>10</sup>

The state of mind of soldiers was of special concern to General George C. Marshall, President Roosevelt’s trusted Chief of Staff. The willingness of the men to accept the army regimen, their enthusiasm, and their ability to carry out their assignments were the product of a complex of attitudes subsumed under the term *morale*.<sup>11</sup> A Morale branch was created and began the task of educating soldiers with orientation lectures. The lectures were not effective. As Major Edward L. Munson of the Morale branch wrote in July of 1941, “There is every indication that the bulk of our soldiers have no real knowledge of why they are in training.”<sup>12</sup> Munson recommended that a variety of propaganda mediums be tested, and urged that the Morale Branch solicit the help of the motion picture industry. Munson described the situation as a “morale emergency” and recommended that not only the recruits, but also the civilian population be educated and motivated.<sup>13</sup>

### **Why We Fight**

In 1942, Marshall took Munson’s advice and called upon Frank Capra to produce a documentary film series called *Why We Fight*. The series became the basis for the army orientation course, and the first film, *Prelude to War*, was shown as part of regular movie presentations throughout the country. David Culbert praised the series as “the most comprehensive set of war aims released by the United States government in any medium during World War II.”<sup>14</sup>



To many, Capra did not seem the likely choice for the job; he had never produced a documentary. Marshall was attracted to the patriotic nature of some of Capra's recent films like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, which "suggested Capra's inclination and capacity to use film to convey simple truths to mass audiences."<sup>15</sup>

A statement made by Italian-born Capra also revealed his interest in pursuing the *Why We Fight* project: "An evil man like Hitler could reach fifteen million people for twenty minutes, but a movie director like me could communicate with hundreds of millions for two hours. I was wasting my God-given talents, making me an offense not to God, but to humanity."<sup>16</sup>

To prepare for his project, Capra decided to check out his competition, namely Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, a product of Nazi propaganda. *Triumph of the Will* used powerful symbols, editing, and music to depict Hitler as a national savior. *Triumph of the Will* had convinced military leaders and filmmakers all over the world how powerful and persuasive a film could be for propaganda. Its distribution to remote parts of Germany showed that film could unify an entire population.<sup>17</sup>

Capra was shocked by the power of *Triumph of the Will* and made two decisions. First, he would use footage from this film to condemn the mob psychology. Secondly, Capra believed his series would surpass Reifenstahl's accomplishments.<sup>18</sup> Capra was determined that *Why We Fight* would: "shock, cajole, flatter, and uplift America; using every gimmick in Hollywood's sales kit, it would blend the dark necessity of military service into a theatrical epic."<sup>19</sup>

Capra's knowledge of the industry allowed him to get the best cutters, screenwriters, and directors in Hollywood. Capra also had the best animators. The staff

at the Disney Studio proved to be the best in the business with “the most brilliant animated maps ever to appear in official films.”<sup>20</sup>

The first film, *Prelude to War*, begins with the question of why Americans are being called to war. The answer given was not based on Nazi aggression in Europe or the Japanese attack, but the deeper issue of the fight between the free world and the slave world. The film forced Americans to see that individual and national problems were, and always would be, dependent upon the problems of the whole world.<sup>21</sup>

In October 1942, Capra finished work on *Prelude* and showed the film to his superiors. President Roosevelt was “thrilled” by the film and enthusiastic over its propaganda potential.<sup>22</sup> The next step was getting theatres to show the fifty-five minute film. One advertisement depicted a soldier with the plea, “He gave a lifetime. Mister, can you spare 55 minutes of screen time?”<sup>23</sup>

Six other films in the *Why We Fight* series followed, including: *The Nazi's Strike* (1943), *Divide and Conquer* (1943), *The Battle of Britain* (1943), *The Battle of Russia* (1944), *The Battle of China* (1944), and *War Comes to America* (1943).

Shown to both soldiers and civilians, the *Why We Fight* series was a major Hollywood contribution to the American propaganda efforts. Capra's decision to use the enemy's acts, books, speeches, films, and newsreels was an act of “stunning simplicity.”<sup>24</sup> As David Culbert describes, The *Why We Fight* films defined American war objectives to military and civilian audiences throughout the world in a way Roosevelt's *Four Freedoms* never could. It is the medium of film, which provides the most comprehensive statement of war aims produced in America between 1941 and 1945.<sup>25</sup>

## The B's

Less dramatic than the *Why We Fight* series, but equally important as a part of Hollywood's contribution to the propaganda efforts were the *B's*. *B's* were low-grade, low budget supporting films that were a little more than sixty minutes long. The name *B* comes from the low-budget aspect of the film. By 1935, more than seventy-five percent of America's cinemas ran double bills consisting of the major feature, supplemented with newsreels, cartoons, and a *B*.<sup>26</sup> Every major studio had its own *B*-section, and by 1941, hundreds of *B*-movies flickered on the silver screen. When Pearl Harbor shook Americans from their complacency about the war, the *B*-industry went to work turning out title after title, touching upon the national emergency. No subject, issue, person, or location was omitted.<sup>27</sup>

The best-known *B*-musical was *Rosie the Riveter*, a film that "idealized the distaff factory assemblers who worked long hours turning out military aircraft in noisy defense plants."<sup>28</sup> The protagonist was an All-American girl who postponed her marriage "because Uncle Sam needed everyone to pitch in and fight the Axis."<sup>29</sup> Her fiancé ended up joining the army, and the two agreed to wed only after the last place left the assembly line. Rosie was awarded a prestigious certificate from a United States Senator as a chorus sang: "There's Something True About Red, White, and Blue."<sup>30</sup>

The *B*-title *Rosie the Riveter* became a popular catchword on the home front. Many women, regardless of their wartime occupations, became known as *Rosies*. While the GI's fought the war, the *Rosies* kept the factories rolling, producing important supplies. The *B* hit proved to be an effective propaganda tool: almost every family sent at least one female member to work on the assembly line.<sup>31</sup>

The *B*-productions played an integral role in the overall Hollywood film propaganda of World War II. The amount of *B*'s produced, and the enormous crowds that viewed them, allowed the same messages to be hammered into the minds of Americans: "spies were everywhere, so watch out; Uncle Sam needed workers, do your part; find a job in a defense plant; and the Axis enemies, when confronted on the foreign battlefield by the American GI, always capitulated to the Red, White, and Blue."<sup>32</sup>

There is debate over the effectiveness of Hollywood's propaganda efforts during World War II. The films satisfied home front viewers about Allied victories and kept military and civilian morale high, but many times they over simplified issues, distorted the truth and presented fiction as fact. One GI, fed up with Hollywood's propaganda, sent a letter to Time magazine in 1944 calling the war time movies "idiotic hoopla."<sup>33</sup> The GI criticized the perfect superman appearance of the soldier who, with "well-manicured bare hands, killed 180 Japanese soldiers."<sup>34</sup>

Evidence of *Prelude to War*'s effect on audiences is less than dramatic. Ironically, no scientific sample could show that a will to win had been instilled solely through these films.<sup>35</sup> "Understanding of the threat posed by totalitarian nations to 'our way of life' varied only four percent between those who had not seen it and those who had."<sup>36</sup>

In 1945, Dorothy B. Jones, head of the Reviewing and Analysis section of the Hollywood office of OWI, personally screened or read 1300 features released from 1942 through 1944. She concluded that "out of the 1300 features only 50 aided significantly, both at home and abroad, in increasing understanding of the conflict."<sup>37</sup> This means only four percent of the film output made a contribution, according to her standards.

Much of the criticism aimed at Hollywood is probably misguided and should be directed toward propaganda efforts in general. Hollywood was criticized for oversimplifying issues, presenting only one side of a message, neglecting important aspects of an event or issue, and repeating the same simple themes over and over. Hollywood is guilty of doing all of those things, but that is essentially the nature of propaganda. For most movie-goers on the home front, the Hollywood motion picture industry provided the encouragement needed to sustain morale during the country's somber days of defeat, and when the tide turned, glorified the many battles that brought the armed forces closer to V-J Day. Many components contributed to the Allied final victory in August 1945 and the propaganda films ranked high on the list.<sup>38</sup>

Through documentary films, like Capra's *Why We Fight* and the vast number of B-productions like *Rosie the Riveter*, Hollywood played its role in the propaganda efforts of World War II. Hollywood took the war from far off battlefields and brought it home to theatres in towns and cities across the United States. Hollywood was able to entertain, but at the same time raise consciousness and motivate people to care about the war effort. Hollywood's battlefield was the silver screen. Its directors were generals; its actors were soldiers; its cameras were weapons; and its scripts were attack plans. Hollywood was able to assist the military by winning the hearts and minds of the American public during World War II.

### **The Foreign Propaganda Effort**

But winning *American* hearts and minds was not the only concern of the military. To be successful in its propaganda campaign, American war ideals needed not only to be *seen* by Americans, but also *heard* by foreign audiences. America had to get a consistent and powerful message across to the world: "Americans were sympathetic, even

sentimental, according to a 1942 directive. They combined an idealistic aspiration towards Utopia with a shrewd, hard, horse sense... They are slow to anger, but, once aroused, they finish what they start."<sup>39</sup> Director of the Office of War Information Elmer Davis said the basic message was "that we are coming, that we are going to win, and that in the long run everybody will be better off because we won."<sup>40</sup>

During the years between the two world wars, the fear of propaganda, which had been initiated by massive persuasion campaigns by both Allies and the Central powers during World War I, increased with the successful fascist movements of the 1930s.<sup>41</sup> International radio propaganda had developed in Europe and Asia during the 1930s and by September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, every major power except the United States had its own foreign broadcasting service. Americans were shocked at the success of the German army's military and propaganda strengths. By the end of the 1930s German radio was on the air over twenty-one hours a day, working to divide, confuse and fragment the world.<sup>42</sup> The French had been protected by the Maginot Line and by as strong an army as existed in the West: yet France had collapsed within weeks of the German assault. Many believed that France had fallen because the French will to resist had been undermined by Nazi propaganda. "It had been a battle won by words in which the first, and crucial blow had come by airwaves."<sup>43</sup>

At the beginning of the war, most of the country, including President Roosevelt, rejected propaganda as an instrument of foreign policy, but those feelings subsided with an increase in fear of Nazi propaganda. In late 1940, Roosevelt appointed a special committee to study the issue. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson warned the committee that the Germans were undermining the American institutions of freedom of press and

freedom of discussion, and that the nation would have to fight back. Other advisors told the committee that "the country should mobilize for propaganda warfare just as much as it needed to for ground and air warfare."<sup>44</sup> Liberal playwright and presidential speech writer, Robert E. Sherwood proclaimed that "America had to fight Nazi propaganda with American propaganda."<sup>45</sup>

Following the Battle of Britain, President Roosevelt became more convinced. He called for the establishment of an executive agency with the responsibility of overseas intelligence and foreign propaganda. In July 1941, William J. Donovan was appointed Coordinator of Information (COI) and almost immediately asked Sherwood to serve as director of international propaganda. Sherwood agreed and chose short-wave radio as America's primary medium for overseas propaganda.

Radio was ready made for propaganda. Roosevelt himself had proved the power of radio with his fireside chats. Before the chats, only one White House employee was necessary to handle all the presidential mail. Following the first fireside chat unanswered letters piled up in Roosevelt's White House. Through radio, Roosevelt had established an almost personal relationship with the American electorate.<sup>46</sup>

The invention of short-wave broadcasting in the early 1920s had expanded the potential of broadcasting. Short-waves bounce like stones skipping across water and strike the earth in regular intervals. This skipping effect allowed short wave radio to be heard over a longer distance and across international boundaries.<sup>47</sup>

Radio was the best way to actually reach Europeans. Leaflets could be dropped, but risking planes and lives on non-military operations was not appealing to the Royal Air Force. It was difficult to plant newspaper stories in Nazi-occupied Europe and

impossible to show films or hang up posters. Radio had the power to go behind enemy lines and reach directly into peoples' homes.<sup>48</sup> Radio can reach the masses, but can also achieve the intimacy of a conversation.<sup>49</sup> With government censorship of newspapers and curfews that kept them at home, most Europeans relied entirely on radio to get their war information.<sup>50</sup> Radio soon became the fourth fighting arm of the war.

Radio did have its problems. Sherwood was not permitted to create an overseas radio broadcasting station. As with the Hollywood propaganda efforts, an established industry played a large part in working out arrangements for borrowed transmission. Roosevelt felt strongly that borrowing, rather than creating its own station would keep the good graces of the private radio industry. Sherwood was left to rely on existing short wave outlets, and the radio industry was reluctant to cooperate. Initial radio programs suffered from both physical and atmospheric interference. Relying on the BBC to transmit its programs, American messages were subject to censorship by the British who wanted to conform the messages to British propaganda goals. Even the direct short wave broadcasts were subject to atmospheric interference and poor reception.<sup>51</sup>

### **Voice of America is Born**

Pearl Harbor transformed the situation. It gave Sherwood the emergency and heightened public awareness he needed to convince the president to create a station with foreign service as its primary operation. On February 24, 1942 a new government radio station called the Voice of America was born. William Harlan Hale opened the first VOA broadcast with the words, "The Voice of America speaks. Today, America has been at war for 79 days. Daily at this time, we shall speak to you about America and the war--the news may be good or bad---we shall tell you the truth."<sup>52</sup> A well-known radio,



theatre and film producer John Houseman was its first director and was for foreign propaganda what Frank Capra was for domestic. Like Roosevelt, Houseman had first hand experience with the power of radio; he had joined Orson Welles in producing *The War of the Worlds*, a radio broadcast of a fictional invasion from Mars that did not seem fictional to the listeners who fled their homes in fear. Once adequate resources were available, the Yankee Doodle signature of the Voice of America was heard in all corners of the globe.<sup>53</sup>

By 1942, the Voice of America broadcast from New York to Europe twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week in twenty-seven languages. News formed the backbone of the Voice's efforts. Sherwood decided early in the war to avoid the emotional appeals on the assumption that the people abroad, deafened by years of enemy propaganda, would respond best to a presentation of the facts of war. He also believed "that all U.S. information to the world should be considered as though it were a continuous speech by the president." Spot news made up much of the output, but it was supplemented by feature stories and interpretive pieces that helped place events in the framework of the war.<sup>54</sup>

Houseman supported the use of news, but rejected the single-voice news reporting of private stations and the BBC. He wanted to create a special American sound that would announce to the overseas listener that this was America speaking. Houseman was not a product of the world of journalism, and so in developing his style he relied upon his knowledge of radio drama, radio documentary and live political theatre.

To give VOA a distinct sound, each broadcast was introduced by three announcers:

FIRST VOICE: This is New York, the United States of America, calling the people of Europe.

SECOND VOICE: Every morning at this time you hear our voices from America

THIRD VOICE: telling you what this country is doing and thinking towards winning the war.<sup>55</sup>

Houseman also applied the use of multiple speakers to news accounts:

FIRST VOICE: It came in communiqués from Lt. General Joseph Stilwell which announced that American warplanes are now in full cooperation with the Chinese offensive. Here is that important communiqué:

SECOND VOICE: American bombers and fighters attacked Japanese headquarters at Linchuan in Kiangski Province, dropping demolition and incendiary bombs while Japanese ground troops were attacking.<sup>56</sup>

Houseman used the style in a feature describing the severity of Nazi rule in Vichy France.

The multiple voices projected an image of democracy, a nation of many voices working together to win the war:

VOICE: Such is the law of Nazi Germany.

VOICE: All that is forbidden is required.

VOICE: Such is the voice Hitler wants to impose on the world.

VOICE: All that is forbidden is required.

VOICE: Such is the law the Vichy Kommandatur wants to impose on the French.

VOICE: Free expression,

VOICE: Forbidden!

VOICE: To be a patriot,

VOICE: Forbidden!

VOICE: To eat enough,

VOICE: Forbidden.<sup>57</sup>

Houseman wanted this dialogue to tell the ordinary person that she or he could take action that would affect the course of events. Through its style, VOA urged its audience to take their fate into their own hands and resist Axis powers.<sup>58</sup>

Not everyone loved Houseman's style. A British commentator once called VOA's tone rather like "selling Colgate toothpaste, urgently."<sup>59</sup> The OWI was also disapproving of Houseman's approach to propaganda. Congress did not dismantle VOA, but did express discontent with the station's liberal political position and radical thirties tone, and Louis Cowan replaced Houseman as director of VOA. By 1943, it had become clear that the Allies were going to be successful; increasing numbers of allied victories made the war its own best salesman. American propagandists turned to a low key, informational propaganda in the broadcasting style of network news. A new political viewpoint called for a new artistic vision.<sup>60</sup>

### **Post-War Propaganda**

American propaganda matured during World War II, and with the maturity came a more realistic assessment of what propaganda might do. In the end, the radio and film campaigns of OWI played a useful part in the struggle, but always in conjunction with a host of other weapons that were equally, if not more, important.<sup>61</sup>

The end of the war also raised difficult questions about what kind of goals the American government hoped to achieve in post-war propaganda and what sort of agency should survive the war. In 1945, the State Department had not yet created a plan. In contrast from other countries, America's international broadcasting was established purely as a wartime expedient, with no peacetime experience to fall back on once the war ended. Many Americans were not prepared to allow propaganda, which they regarded as

only a wartime necessity, to impinge upon foreign diplomacy in times of peace.<sup>62</sup> Three possibilities emerged for organizing information after the war ended. First, a government information service could operate within the State Department. Second, an independent agency, similar to the OWI, might be formed. Third, the private sector could shoulder the burden, with each company supporting its own efforts and working in loose coordination with the government.<sup>63</sup>

The Voice of America did not end in 1945 but rather was transferred, along with other activities of the Overseas Branch, to the State Department. There it remained for the next few years, "badly staffed and demoralized, a shell of its former self, going through the motions without well-defined political goals" to guide it.<sup>64</sup> The United States remained unwilling to support a serious international broadcasting station until 1947, when "the cold war defined a new enemy and infused the Voice with new meaning and new energy."<sup>65</sup>

### **Propaganda v. Democracy**

America remained in a constant struggle on the ethics of using propaganda, both at home and abroad. As one writer stated, "a democratic government is completely precluded, by its own principles, from all use of propaganda, understood in the sense of the authoritative installation of one view to the exclusion of others."<sup>66</sup> The OWI had a number of potentially conflicting goals. It was to provide truthful information to the American public, and meanwhile to develop campaigns, like those on behalf of bond buying or factory output, to secure certain actions by that public. At the same time it was to provide truthful information to overseas audiences, but that material had to be slanted for the purposes of propaganda.<sup>67</sup>

In dictatorships it was much easier for a government to speak with one voice. In Germany propaganda had long been centralized under the direction of Joseph Goebbels. The message that emerged was inflated, exaggerated, and distorted in the interests of achieving victory. Japan's message was also controlled; victories were hailed and defeats hidden from the public eye. In the Soviet Union propaganda had long supported the goals of Soviet policy. The greatest struggle came in the nature of the American belief in the war itself. Propaganda used to promote democracy in the hopeful, idealistic terms of the early founders of OWI seemed out of place in a war that policy makers claimed they were "fighting for the purposes of military victory alone."<sup>68</sup>

War has often made the lines between right and wrong a bit blurry. Certainly Capra and Houseman did not see their actions as unethical. And what harm could be caused by Rosie or simple news coverage from the war front? To win war of words, the U.S. called upon all of its resources, from the silver screen to the radio airwaves to provide a positive voice of America and voice in America. The U.S. was willing to compromise whenever it felt it might bring a speedy end to hostilities, even when the compromises seemed to call into question the very reasons for going to war.<sup>69</sup>

*It was from the air that America had dropped the atomic bombs that ended World War II. It was by air that America had sustained its hold on West Berlin during the darkest moment of the Cold War. It was through the air that the Voice of America subverted the enemy Soviet Union.*<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Archibald MacLeish, Office of War Information

<sup>2</sup> H.D. Lasswell, Propaganda Technique in the World War (New York: Knopf Press, 1927)

<sup>3</sup> H.C. Shulman, The Voice of America: propaganda and democracy, 1941-1945 (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990) 13.

<sup>4</sup> D. Culbert, Film and Radio Propaganda in World War II, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1983) 173-189.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem

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- <sup>6</sup> A.M. Winkler, The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945 (London: Yale University, 1978) 57.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibidem
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> R. Fyne, The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II (London: the Scarecrow Press, 1994) 10-13.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibidem
- <sup>11</sup> R.W. Steele, "The Greatest Gangster Movie Ever Filmed: Prelude to War," Prologue 11 (1979): 223-225.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibidem
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> P.C. Rollins, "Frank Capra's Why We Fight series and our American Dream," Journal of American Culture 19 (1996): 81.
- <sup>15</sup> Steele, 227.
- <sup>16</sup> Rollins, 82.
- <sup>17</sup> Culbert.
- <sup>18</sup> Rollins
- <sup>19</sup> Rollins, 83.
- <sup>20</sup> Culbert, 182.
- <sup>21</sup> Steele
- <sup>22</sup> Steele, 231.
- <sup>23</sup> Steele, 233.
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- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
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- <sup>32</sup> Fyne, 147.
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- <sup>44</sup> Memorandum, McCloy to George C. Marshall, February 8, 1941, box 18, Lilly Papers.
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- <sup>52</sup> *Voice of America: A Brief History* (Pamphlet produced by Voice of America)
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- <sup>54</sup> Winkler, 78.
- <sup>55</sup> Shulman (1987) 31.
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- <sup>58</sup> Ibid.
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